



Support.  
Learn.  
Achieve.  
Baltimore

# Changing the odds for children, youth and families in East Baltimore







“Elev8 doesn’t just help your child,  
it helps your family and household.  
I’ve never seen a program like this.”

CANDACE BAXTER

Parent at Tench Tilghman Elementary/Middle School

“Because of Elev8,  
my child really enjoys  
being at school.”

LAVONN OLIPHANT

Parent at Collington Square School

“A school should always  
have a program like this.”

PATRICIA RUMSEY

Grandparent at Dr. Rayner Browne Academy



ABOUT THE MOSAIC THEME: Students involved in a summer program at Dr. Rayner Browne Academy created a sprawling tile mosaic that has inspired an essential design element in this publication. When the sun hit the mosaic, a radiant sunburst glistened from the tiles. A rendering of this sunburst appears on the cover and throughout the following pages.





# WELCOME to Elev8 Baltimore

Elev8 Baltimore partners with schools, families and the community to ensure that every student is prepared to succeed in school and in life.

Launched in August 2009, we engage families to help them become strong advocates for themselves and their communities, and we coordinate services and opportunities focused on learning, health and family engagement.



# HERE'S HOW WE WORK

## THE INITIATIVE HAS THREE CENTRAL COMPONENTS:

### ■ LEARNING

After-school and summer activities support young people to help them improve attendance, gain confidence and advance academically.

### ■ HEALTH

School-based health services and health promotion programs offered to students and families are raising awareness of health needs – physical and emotional – and making it easier for families to take greater advantage of health services for their children.

### ■ FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Parents who are economically stronger and connected to other parents are more likely to be involved in their children's learning. We offer families tools to achieve economic self-sufficiency, including access to workforce, housing and social service supports, and opportunities to advocate for themselves and the community.

85%



Percent of students participating in Elev8 Baltimore who say they get a chance to do new things.

89%



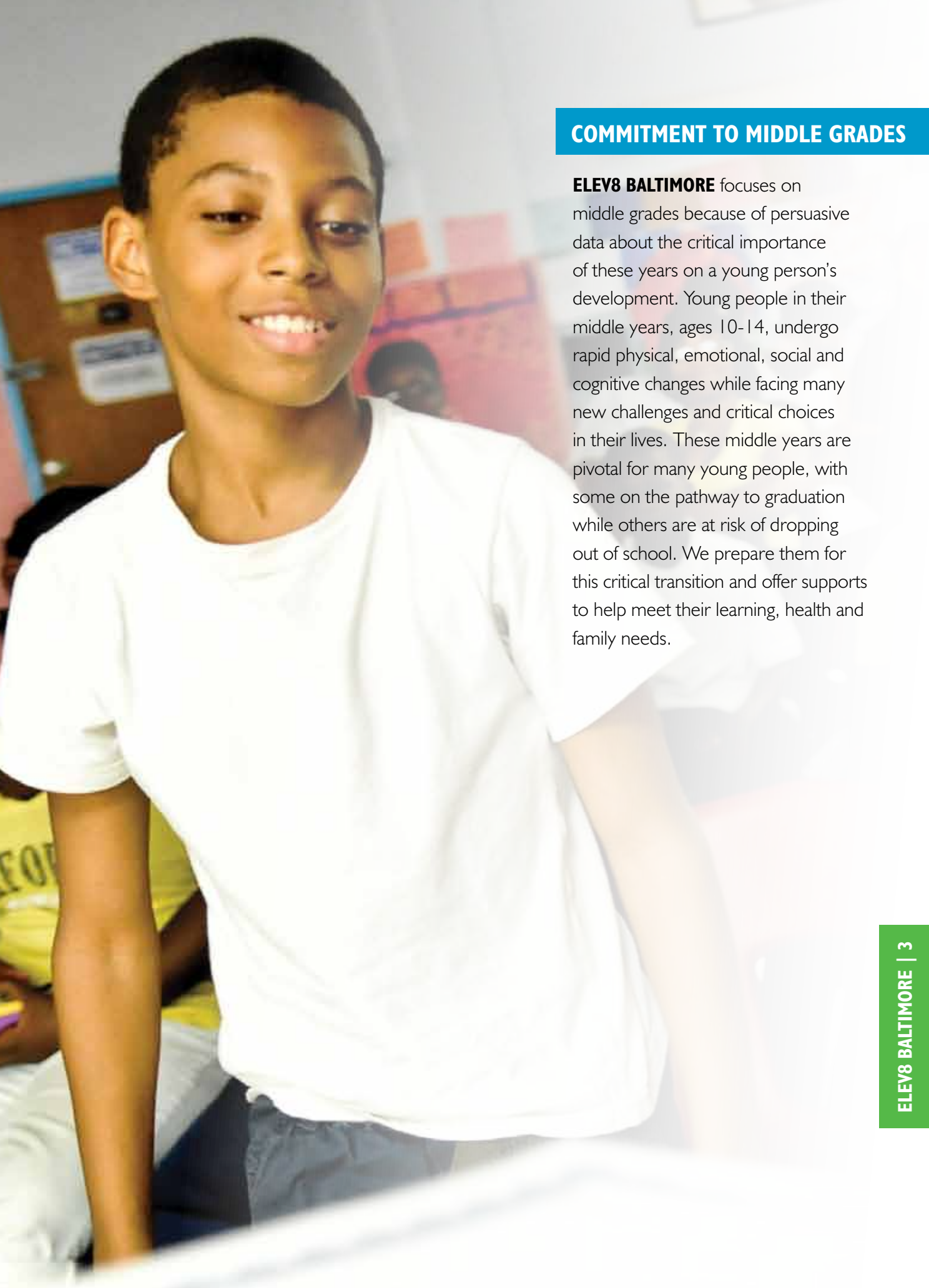
Percent of students participating in Elev8 Baltimore who say staff challenge them to do their best.

67%



Percent of students who report that their parents attend school events.





## COMMITMENT TO MIDDLE GRADES

**ELEV8 BALTIMORE** focuses on middle grades because of persuasive data about the critical importance of these years on a young person's development. Young people in their middle years, ages 10-14, undergo rapid physical, emotional, social and cognitive changes while facing many new challenges and critical choices in their lives. These middle years are pivotal for many young people, with some on the pathway to graduation while others are at risk of dropping out of school. We prepare them for this critical transition and offer supports to help meet their learning, health and family needs.



# CHANGING LIVES WITH LEARNING SUPPORTS

**Elev8 Baltimore's after-school program and six-week summer program are targeted at addressing persistent educational gaps, offering challenging activities and encouraging physical activity, cultural appreciation and academic achievement.**

During the school year, students are enrolled in after-school programming each semester. The program begins with an Academic Hour, which is facilitated by learning coaches, where students are organized into groups of 10-15 according to academic interests or needs. Skill areas and curricula are aligned with the instructional scope and sequencing of each school ensuring that after school and day school are reinforcing each other. The program concludes with 90-minute Enrichment Activities, facilitated by community-based partners.







## ELEV8 BALTIMORE | STUDENT PROFILE

Before she began participating in Elev8 Baltimore's after-school programs, Ciara Hawkins, a seventh-grader at Collington Square School, struggled with a short temper and often took out her anger on other people. But her mother, Lavonn Oliphant, says all of that has changed as she has watched her daughter turn into a more pleasant and conscientious student.

Throughout sixth grade, Ciara's grades began to falter as she grew angrier and less interested in school. But thanks to her participation in Elev8 Baltimore's programs, she has maintained A's and B's in her classes.

"She has a much improved attitude," Oliphant says. "She's learning to control her temper and her grades are better. The activities have helped her focus because she likes to be involved. The activities give her positive outlets."

Ciara has participated in just about every Elev8 activity offered at her school – from dancing to modeling and etiquette to tutoring and mentoring. Through Elev8 Baltimore, Ciara's mother also learned about a counseling program that has helped Ciara deal with her emotions.

"With Elev8 in the school, it's making a big difference," Oliphant says. "Ciara attends school regularly because she really enjoys being at school now."



# CHANGING LIVES WITH HEALTH ACCESS

**Research has shown that students with access to school-based health services attend school more often and are more engaged and ready to learn.**

For a family with limited transportation, limited or no employment or health insurance, having access to good medical care is not a guarantee. In some ways, providing students the medical services they need is our most important work. Healthy children attend school more often and are more focused during the school day, which means they are better prepared to learn, grow and thrive as students.

Elev8 Baltimore has partnered with Baltimore Medical System Inc., Baltimore City Health Department, the Department of Pediatrics at Johns Hopkins-Bayview, and Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing to provide high-quality care to students in East Baltimore. Health care services and education include:

- Access to a full-time school nurse and medical assistant
- Administration of prescribed medications
- Physical exams and immunizations
- Behavioral health programs and support groups
- Reproductive health education and services
- On-site screening and treatment for chronic illnesses
- Dental and vision services

With access to a health suite and medical professionals, students are able to better manage chronic conditions such as asthma while at school – in most cases, they are able to return to class and benefit from a full day's worth of instruction. Our results show that they exhibit greater health knowledge and take significantly greater advantage of mental health and physical health services while depending far less on emergency care.

With continued investments in the health of our children, we expect to see better attendance rates and we are excited about the academic progress students have shown and will continue to experience.



# 2,491



Number of visits to school-based health centers during the 2010-2011 school year.





## ELEV8 BALTIMORE | HEALTH MATTERS

School-based health centers at Collington Square School and Tench Tilghman Elementary/Middle School empower students each school day to take control of many of their health needs. For instance, chronic health conditions such as asthma might normally send a child home, but with medical assistants, nurses and physicians on-site at the schools, students are able to be treated and then return to class for a full day's worth of instruction.

Our school-based health centers offer expanded medical services and alleviate some pressures on our families by enabling children to see a physician at the school, taking care of such important medical concerns as sick visits.

"It gives me a great comfort to know that with the physician and medical staff on-site at the school, they won't hesitate to attend to your children if it's something they can deal with on the spot," says Candace Baxter, mother of two children at Tench Tilghman. "It's important because if my children aren't feeling well, they can be treated and then head back to class and not have to worry about getting behind on their work or miss homework."

The recent renovation and expansion of Tench Tilghman's health suite, completed February 2012 in partnership with Baltimore Medical System, resulted in a 700-square-foot space that includes two exam rooms, a triage area, new lab equipment to enable on-site testing, as well as equipment for hearing and vision screenings. The renovation serves as a testament to Elev8 Baltimore's commitment to improving the lives of the children of East Baltimore by expanding their access to much-needed health services.





## ELEV8 BALTIMORE | STUDENT PROFILE

Lakira Anderson, a student at East Baltimore Community School, was known as a shy bookworm when she signed up to participate in Elev8 Baltimore's after-school programs. Her mother says Lakira has since blossomed into a vibrant role model and leader, even leading several girls in her class to strive to study harder and get better grades.

"What Elev8 has done for her is life-changing," Lakira's mother, Anna Anderson, says of her now-confident daughter.

When several girls were becoming disruptive in school, Lakira pulled them aside for a pep talk and encouraged them to strive to be better students.

"She told them, 'We're going to be the best,' and they have gotten down to business to get better grades," Mrs. Anderson says.

Participating in Elev8 Baltimore's art enrichment programs has given Lakira the opportunity to learn jewelry making and tap dance. The experience also gave her the confidence to audition for the prestigious Baltimore School of the Arts TWIGS program for aspiring artists. Being accepted into TWIGS was one of Lakira's proudest moments.

As a parent, Mrs. Anderson says she is thankful that Elev8 Baltimore provides such opportunities for students to explore their gifts and talents.

"Many inner-city families can't afford activities like dance classes," Mrs. Anderson says. "Elev8 gives our children these opportunities and they soak them up like sponges."



# CHANGING LIVES WITH FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

**The Elev8 Baltimore approach to family engagement integrates parent education, parent leadership development and family self-sufficiency supports, including workforce development and financial literacy.**

To foster family engagement, Elev8 Baltimore provides a full-time family advocate in each partner school to conduct outreach and develop programs for parents. A key component to the success of our family work is encouraging parents' involvement with the school and their children's academic progress while addressing barriers to engagement such as homelessness, and un- or under-employment. Through a partnership with Humanim, a community-based organization specializing in workforce development, we are able to provide year-round case management and job training supports to parents and caregivers.

## ADVOCACY EFFORTS

With three grandchildren enrolled at Dr. Rayner Browne Academy, Patricia Rumsey is always ready to volunteer. Those volunteer hours usually meant assisting with day-to-day tasks in the front office or pitching in during lunchtime in the cafeteria.

But through Elev8 Baltimore, Rumsey has learned advocacy skills that will help the school and its students for years to come.

Elev8 Baltimore has taken parents and students to Annapolis to protest education budget cuts for Baltimore City Public Schools. Through this initiative, thousands of people – including Elev8 Baltimore parents, students and school staff – have spoken up on behalf of education funding for the city's schools.

Students also participated in Elev8 Youth Advocacy Day, an annual trip to Washington, D.C., where students take the Elev8 message to congressional leaders to help raise awareness about the importance of supporting educational programs that help give young people what they need to excel academically and succeed in life and career.

"Elev8 has made a big difference by teaching us how to speak up for ourselves," Rumsey says. "Before this, I didn't realize I had the power to go to Annapolis and ask for what we need in our schools. Before this, I wasn't a very outspoken person. Elev8 has given me a voice."







## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT & PARENT RESOURCES

"Every day I thank Elev8 and Humanim for giving me a chance to get back into the work world – and to be able to make my children proud of me," Candace Baxter, 32, says with a wide smile. "Elev8 doesn't just help your child. It helps your entire family and household. I've never seen a program like this."

Through a partnership with the nonprofit Humanim, Elev8 Baltimore offers an array of workforce development services for parents.

Baxter, whose son Kyle attends Tench Tilghman Elementary/Middle School, says she learned about Elev8 Baltimore's workforce development and employment assistance programs when her son brought home a sign-up sheet from school one day.

With Elev8 Baltimore's tutoring support, Kyle's already good grades have improved from mostly B's to Honor Roll. He also became quite the chess player by taking part in Elev8 Baltimore's after-school program, and easily beats everyone at home.

The biggest changes, though, have benefitted the entire family. By participating in Elev8 Baltimore's workshops such as resume writing, how to interview for a job, how to dress more professionally and how to look for a job, Baxter landed a full-time position with benefits as a receptionist for Humanim.

"This has been so significant in my family's life," Baxter says. "We as parents need this help that Elev8 is introducing to us."

Not only is she able to better provide for her children, Baxter says she is heartened by how much happier and relaxed her children have become. She says Kyle is more focused now, less burdened by the financial stresses that she struggled with for years.

"Elev8 has changed my household tremendously," Baxter says. "There's a different vibe in my house altogether. I feel so good about myself. My children are proud of me. They're smiling more."







## ELEV8 BALTIMORE | FAMILY ORIENTED

Lavonn Oliphant, parent of seventh-grader Ciara Hawkins at Collington Square School, loves that Elev8 Baltimore's programs are family oriented.

"There are things that some families can't do on their own," Oliphant says. "Elev8 Baltimore helps parents better themselves and makes us feel like there is someone out there for you, someone who wants to help us improve ourselves."

Through Elev8 Baltimore and its partnership with Humanim, Oliphant has joined many other parents in workshops on stress relief techniques, exercise, credit counseling, GED preparation and job counseling.

Oliphant says she enjoys being involved in her daughter's school life, and is grateful that Elev8 Baltimore holds Parent-Teacher Organization meetings in the morning and in the evening.

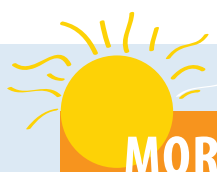
"That has made it much easier to attend the meetings and be involved," she says. "I feel like I'm not missing out on anything."



# A DAY IN THE LIFE OF



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## MORNING



## LUNCH TIME



### Lunch-and-Learn

During a Lunch-and-Learn session with Baltimore Medical System Inc., students and parents learn about cyber-bullying and ways to respond when one feels harassed or picked on.



## AFTER SCHOOL

### Academic Hour

Learning coaches, young adults from local colleges and universities, arrive to assist students with homework, and engage them in supplemental math and literacy lessons.



## EVENING



### Supper

Students end the day with a hot meal sponsored by the Family League of Baltimore City.





### Muffins with Moms/Donuts with Dads

Over coffee and pastries parents learn what a “benchmark” score is and why it’s important to their children’s education.



During the summer months, Elev8 Baltimore hosts the Children’s Defense Fund (CDF) Freedom Schools® program for six weeks each year. The full-day program motivates students to read, and encourages positive attitudes toward learning by taking the following approach: use of an evidence-based Integrated Reading Curriculum (IRC) that introduces students to books they can take home to build a personal library; classes of no more than 10 students with each engaged in reading; and, hands-on classroom activities related to the day’s reading that use a variety of teaching models. At the end of the summer, each student takes home the books from the program to build personal libraries fostering great reading habits.

### Transition to Enrichments

Students engage in mind-stimulating, skill-building activities such as Girls Volleyball, Urban Debate League, Cheerleading and Basketball, African Drumming and Tap and Modern Dance.



### Meeting of the Organized Parent Group

Parents elect new officers and set priorities for next year.

### Parent University

Parents participate in sessions on helpful topics such as “Nutrition on a Budget,” how to make a great meal without spending a fortune.





# WHERE ARE WE HEADED?

## LOOKING AHEAD, BUILDING ON OUR SUCCESS

As we at Elev8 Baltimore chart the course for the future, we are committed to building on our initial successes to improve student outcomes, strengthen the organization and build long-term sustainability. Our motivation is the pursuit of this fundamental question, “How do we best fulfill our mission to improve outcomes for students?”

To serve more children and families in East Baltimore in the years ahead, a few of our key initiatives will include:

- Transitioning from a grade-level to a whole-school approach to coordinate services for grades K-8.
- Expanding to serve an additional K-8 school in the East Baltimore area.
- Strengthening academic enrichment and high school guidance to help students prepare for, choose and graduate from a quality high school.
- Creating a student advisory committee and parent advisory committee to increase student and parent leadership and decision-making within Elev8 Baltimore.
- Initiating engagement with high school alumni to provide a continuum of support for students who have graduated from an Elev8 Baltimore school.

Early evidence suggests the long-term impact that Elev8 Baltimore can have on students' school experiences and home stability. To expand Elev8 Baltimore's reach and deepen its imprint, we will undertake a rigorous examination of our results to date and develop strategies to enhance the core model, increase the number of students affected by Elev8 Baltimore and expand our base of champions and advocates.

Through its effect on children and families, Elev8 Baltimore is demonstrating that the conditions of poverty, substance abuse, neighborhood violence and structural disinvestment facing East Baltimore families can be fought and overcome.

## BE A PART OF THE CHANGE

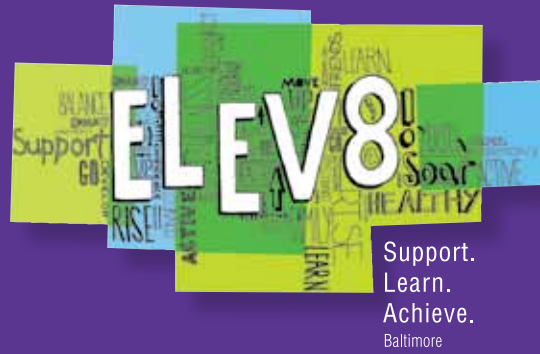
Looking ahead, Elev8 Baltimore is broadening its base of financial support to continue its strong programming. To learn more about our efforts and how you can join us in making a difference in the lives of our children and their families:

- Visit our website ([www.elev8baltimore.org](http://www.elev8baltimore.org)) to sign up to receive updates.
- Volunteer to be a guest reader.
- Make a contribution.









## **Elev8 Baltimore**

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**[elev8baltimore.org](http://elev8baltimore.org)**